

EFFECT OF DIGITALIS ON THE FŒTUS  
IN UTERO.*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Having had occasion to doubt the propriety of employing digitalis to any considerable extent in the treatment of disease occurring during pregnancy, I am anxious to learn from those who have had more extensive experience in such cases than myself, whether or not this drug is injurious to the fœtus in utero. My own experience leads me to think that it may at times exercise a baneful influence on the fœtus. My impression on this subject was first derived during my attendance on a woman in the fifth month of pregnancy, about thirty years of age, who was labouring under typhus fever. She was twice bled at the beginning of the fever, each time to the amount of sixteen or twenty ounces, after which she took a febrifuge mixture, containing *Tinct. Digitalis*. The woman ultimately recovered, and was, at the end of the proper period of utero-gestation, delivered of a living child, whose natural bulk of body was considerably diminished, and whose skin was shrivelled and wrinkled all over, as if absorption of the substance within had been caused by the action of some stimulating medicine. Whether this appearance arose from the depletion which was necessary for the removal of the excessive arterial excitement present at the onset of the complaint, or from the stimulating effect of the digitalis, I cannot presume to say, but I am strongly borne out in my previous views of the influence of this drug on the uterine system, by the recent clinical observations of Professor Thomson, recorded in a No. of the present volume of *THE LANCET*.

It may be argued that digitalis, like the *secale cornutum*, may stimulate and excite the uterine functions without deleteriously affecting the fœtus. I have frequently given the *secale cornutum* in protracted labours, without the production of any apparent bad effects on the child, but there seems evidence of an opposite kind with regard to the internal use of digitalis.

I am of opinion myself, that if it do produce injury to the child, it is not the stimulating, but the sedative effect of the digitalis which does the mischief.

I am, Sir,  
Yours, very respectfully,  
E. WILKINSON.

Aspatia, Feb. 6, 1835.

## ACTIVE PRINCIPLE OF JALAP.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Through the medium of your valuable Journal, I wish to call the attention of the profession to a new remedy in the class of purgative medicines.

It has often been a matter of regret to me during my practice that we had no purgative at once *safe* and *mild* in its action, which could be conveyed in a minute quantity, when the stomach was in an irritable state, or the patient averse from medicine (which is particularly the case with children), who frequently will allow nothing of the kind to be given. However, Mr. Osborn, a scientific chemist, of Southampton, has succeeded in procuring the active principle of jalap in a very pure state, which he considers entitled to the name of "Jalapine." This preparation in the quantity of half a grain given by itself, or combined with hydrarg. submur. or hyd. c. creta, can by given to an infant in a little of its food with perfect safety and ease. From one grain to two, given in the form of pill or in a draught (if the latter, a little spirit must be added to hold it in solution), is a sufficient dose for an adult. Some cases may require three grains, but this will be but seldom needful. The preparation possesses the valuable quality of not producing constipation after its use. Trusting you will give this statement a place in your next Journal, I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant,

W. HAMILTON KITTOE,  
Surgeon.

Southampton, Feb. 26, 1835.

APPARATUS FOR OBLIQUE FRACTURE OF  
THE CLAVICLE.—LITHOTRITIC INSTRUMENT.*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I have forwarded by my son a machine, of which, about a year and a half since, I sent you a description, and which I have found extremely useful in oblique fractures of the clavicle, particularly where, as is sometimes the case from a horse falling upon a person, the shoulder, ribs, or soft parts, are much injured. Another instrument, to be worn under the clothes, I sometime since gave to Messrs. —, late Savigny's in St. James's-street.\* Respecting the lithotritic instrument

\* The apparatus forwarded by Mr. Jones may be seen by any professional gentleman on application at *THE LANCET* Office.—Ed. L.

which is making for me, the cut of which I sent you in October 1833, I may observe that I found, on calling at Mr. Weiss's, that he had used the screw, one of which Mr. Weiss's son showed me, but mine was a three-thread screw, quick in its action, but I prefer the long forceps, as by a little practice the stone may be ground down with more certainty, and, of course, with less irritation to the bladder. The great error seems to me to arise from inattention to the state of the coats of the bladder, as most cases of failure have appeared to arise from inflammation of that viscus or its extension to neighbouring parts. In the course of my life I have seen a great many troublesome cases of acute and chronic inflammations of the bladder, and have found great relief from injections of the soothing kind, at the same time using means to get rid of the general inflammatory diathesis of the system. Why not use the same means after crushing the stone? I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM JONES.

Lutterworth, Jan. 26, 1835.

#### FRENCH JOURNALS.

THE French medical journals at the commencement of the year are generally very irregularly published. This is probably the fault of the Carnival, which disarranges every thing at that period. We have been able as yet to collect only three of the monthly journals for January, viz., the *Journal des Con. Méd.*; the *Archives Générales*; and the *Annales d'Hygiène Publique*, which latter, by-the-by, though dated January 1835, did not make its appearance until the 1st of March.

This latter volume is almost completely occupied by a very long, though a highly interesting article on the ancient history, actual state, and statistics, of the *Maison de Fous*, at Charenton, by M. ESQUIROL, physician to that splendid establishment. We must refer to the memoir itself those who desire to become acquainted with the discipline pursued by the French in cases of mental alienation. The same number contains a curious case of

SUICIDE BY STRANGULATION, without alteration of the skin of the neck or swelling of the face. The case is well worthy the attention of medical jurists:—

Josephine, aged 27 years, was received into the Salpêtrière in Dec., 1834. This girl had led a very disorderly life, and was evidently attacked with mental derangement. She had formerly inhabited the country, and on coming to Paris recovered her self-possession, when her confessor, by saying she was completely lost, threw her back into her former state of depression, &c. The girl appeared sunk in melancholy, though her general health was good. In the visit she frequently demanded to die, as she said she could never be cured. During her treatment she took slight purgatives and some baths. On the

2nd January she got out of bed, descended into the cellar, and hung herself from the banister. On being examined after death, the brain was found perfectly healthy; there was some slight injection of the cerebral substance. The skin of the neck presents a depression obliquely directed from right to left; its most elevated part corresponded with the angle of the right jaw, where the mark of the knot was observed. In the course of this depression the skin was yellowish, and the subjacent cellular tissue strongly adherent; but there was no trace of ecchymosis, or of fracture of the os hyoides, &c. The lungs contained a little blood, as also did the heart; the other viscera were healthy.

The case shows that suspension may take place during life, without leaving any mark of a vital lesion in the dead body. Here we find no puffiness of the face or tongue; no ecchymosis about the neck, no luxation or laceration of the arteries or veins, nothing, in fine, except a slight furrow marked by the cord along the neck, and which did not render it possible to determine whether the suspension was operated on the living or on the dead body.

The number of the *Archives Générales*, for January (the February Number has not yet appeared) contains three original articles, viz.,

1. On the use of cold water as an antiphlogistic in the treatment of surgical diseases, by M. BERARD, surgeon to the Salpêtrière.
2. Remarks on the use of calomel in the practice of medicine, by M. JORET.
3. On an epidemic dysentery at Maine-et-Loire in 1834, by M. GUERETIN.

#### COLD WATER IN SURGICAL DISEASES.

THE first article is a kind of supplement to the memoir lately published on the same subject, by M. JOSSE of Amiens, and which we noticed in a late No. of this